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WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT.

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STEREOTYPERS AND PRINTERS

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT.

Bryant, William Cullen, poet and journalist, was born of good New England stock at Cummington, Massachusetts, November 3, 1794. William was trained to admire the poetry of Pope, and early encouraged to imitate him. The most noted fruit of these attempts was *The Embargo, a Satire by a Youth of Thirteen* (Boston, 1807). In 1810 he entered Williams College, but soon resumed his studies at home, and formed himself by loving study of such poets as his favourites, Blair and Kirke White, while watching with a keen eye the quiet life of nature as he rambled among the woods. His quickened imagination found expression in the majestic blank verse of *Thanatopsis*, which, published in the *North American Review* for September 1817, was at once acknowledged to surpass in grandeur and beauty anything previously written by an American. Meantime Bryant had studied law, had been admitted to the bar, and had settled at Great Barrington. Being called to contribute further to the *Review*, he sent both verse and prose; among the former *Lines to a Water-fowl*, and among the latter a criticism on American poetry. In 1821 he delivered before the Phi Beta Kappa Society at Harvard a poem in Spenserian verse called *The Ages*. In the same year he was married to Miss Frances Fairchild, who inspired his poem *O Fairest of the Rural*

Maids; but he also lost his father, to whom he paid a tribute in his *Hymn to Death.* Other noted poems of this time are: *The Rivulet, The West Wind, Green River, The Forest Hymn,* and *June,* which were published in Boston periodicals. In 1825 the poet was induced by his friends to remove to New York to become editor of *The New York Review,* and when it failed a year later, he was made assistant-editor of the *Evening Post.* In 1829 Bryant became editor-in-chief, and by his ability, dignity, and steady adherence to principle, did much to raise the tone of the daily press. A collection of his poems was published in 1832, and, on its republication in England through Washington Irving, received favourable notice from *Blackwood's Magazine.* Bryant was now, however, absorbed in journalism. His paper was democratic in politics, but when the slavery question became prominent it inclined to the anti-slavery side, and in 1856 it assisted in forming the Republican party. As editor of an influential paper, Bryant was often called upon to make public addresses. A volume of these addresses was published in 1873. His visits to Europe, the West Indies, and many parts of the United States, gave occasion for letters to his paper, which were republished, making three volumes. Meantime his poems had sunk deeply into the minds of his countrymen, and several editions, some of which were finely illustrated, were issued. In his old age, when relieved of the more pressing demands of a daily newspaper, he again permitted the deeper emotions of his heart to flow in verse. The poems of his age bear striking resemblance to those of his youth; they have the same grand simplicity, transparent clearness, wide generalisation. Sometimes,

as in *Robert of Lincoln* and *The Planting of an Apple-tree,* he seemed to strike off a more airy and musical lyric than ever before. At seventy-two he commenced a translation of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in English blank verse, which proved as inadequate as that of many greater men before him. Almost his last poem was *The Flood of Years,* a noble counterpart to *Thanatopsis.* On May 29, 1878, Bryant delivered an eloquent address at the unveiling of a bust of Mazzini, in Central Park, New York. After its close, as he was entering a house, he fell on the doorstep, receiving injuries of which he died June 12. His complete works were published in 4 vols. (1883–84); his Life was written by his son-in-law, Parke Godwin (2 vols. 1883), and other volumes relating to his life and works have been published.

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